

Social Media Handbook: King County

1. PURPOSE

The role of technology in the 21st century workplace is constantly expanding. Social media tools such as Facebook, Twitter and blogs can improve interactivity between government and the public, reaching new and different populations from traditional media sources.

King County departments should choose a combination of traditional and social media that complement each other and distribute information to relevant audiences. This handbook is designed to inform employees and the public, and to ensure transparency and consistency when incorporating social media in King County communications and outreach.

All King County communications, including social media, are public records and must be managed in compliance with public records law.

2. APPLICABILITY

This handbook is applicable to employees of Executive Branch departments that create or contribute to social media on behalf of King County. The handbook also applies to non-Executive Branch agencies adopting this policy (collectively referred to herein as “departments”).

3. DEFINITIONS

- 3.1 Social Media Channels:** Online technologies used to communicate and share information. Social media can take many forms, including but not limited to text, images and video. The definition of social media includes third-party channels such as Facebook and Twitter as well as vendors such as GovDelivery.
- 3.2 Social Media Action Plan (SMAP):** Official document required by departments before creating new social media channels; outlines key questions related to the use of social media, including target audience, goals, and resources.
- 3.3 Executive’s Office:** Executive Branch leadership representing the King County Executive; includes, among others, the director and deputy director of communications.
- 3.4 Social Media Specialist:** Designated employee from KCIT responsible for social media governance, implementation, and strategy; works directly with departments and authorized agents to drive social media initiatives across King County.
- 3.5 Departments:** Executive Branch departments under the authority of the King County Executive as defined by Section 310 of the King County Charter. For the sake of this handbook, the definition of department includes non-Executive Branch agencies adopting this policy (collectively referred to herein as “departments”).
- 3.6 Authorized Agent:** Employee who has been authorized to post social media content on behalf of a department, including but not limited to Public Information Officers (PIOs), communications managers, and program leads.

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- 3.7 Records Management:** Operations staff that assists departments in meeting their obligations to the citizens of King County through responsible public records management as outlined in RCW 40.14 and in KCC 2.12.
- 3.8 King County Information Technology (KCIT):** See KCC 2.16.0755; 0757. Executive Branch department responsible for information management and governance, system maintenance, and security policies; includes the eGovernment Web Team.
- 3.9 Brand Standards:** Refers to the [Graphic Standards and Guidelines](#) that govern use of the King County logo, nameplate, color scheme, and visual identity.
- 3.10 Mobile Apps:** Technologies that can be downloaded to smartphones and tablets and accessed on the go; provides publishing abilities to authorized agents who work at a county worksite or offsite.

4. ROLES & RESPONSIBILITIES

Executive's Office will:

- Maintain a list of approved social media channels that have been recommended and/or reviewed by the Social Media Specialist.
- Reinforce brand standards that are representative of "One King County" as described in the King County Strategic Plan.
- Evaluate and approve all new social media with input from the Social Media Specialist.
- Have final authority to edit or remove content from a department's social media channels.

Social Media Specialist will:

- Recommend social media channels for use by departments, and review new types of social media for effectiveness, efficiencies, and security.
- Work directly with departments to coordinate social media strategies and tactics, including digital communications for specific events and programs.
- Keep up with trends in social media and provide training materials and workshops for departments and authorized agents who use social media regularly.
- Train employees on best practices and implementation on an ongoing basis.
- Manage the program for documenting authorized agents, account logins, and passwords for the purpose of emergency management.
- Set standards for measuring effectiveness of social media, working with departments to establish reporting techniques and success metrics.
- Consider records retention and public records issues whenever implementing social media.

Departments will:

- Oversee and manage social media channels in use by the department.
- Designate and train authorized agents in proper use of social media at King County; refer to this handbook and employee training created by the Social Media Specialist.
- Provide the Social Media Specialist with up-to-date lists of social media channels, account logins, and passwords for the purpose of emergency management.

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- Change social media passwords every 90 days per KCIT policy, or immediately if authorized agents are removed as administrators or leave King County employment.
- Manage records retention of social media in conformity with King County and Washington state recordkeeping requirements.

Authorized Agents will:

- Uphold brand standards and values when representing a department on social media.
- Manage social media in accordance with the Executive Office's Customer Service Promise, such as answering questions or responding to inquiries within 24 hours during the standard work week, and flagging concerns when appropriate.
- Work with the Social Media Specialist to employ best practices for social media use.
- Monitor and measure social media, analyzing effectiveness and making recommendations to the department for continuous improvement.

Records Management will:

- Work with departments to identify appropriate retention periods of social media channels based on the legal, fiscal, administrative, and historical value of the information.
- Provide best practice guidelines on managing social media as a public record.

5. IMPLEMENTATION

King County departments should have a full communications strategy that includes how social media fits into their mission and aligns with the King County Strategic Plan. The Social Media Specialist will lead this initiative for Executive Branch departments.

Departments must complete a Social Media Action Plan (SMAP) that identifies goals, objectives, target audiences, resources, equity consideration, and more.

New Social Media Channels

When planning to launch new social media channels, departments will work with the Social Media Specialist to complete a SMAP that addresses key questions, including:

- Overall vision for social media strategy
- Why a specific social media channel is the right fit vs. the King County website
- Goals
- Objectives
- Target audiences
- Resources and staff time needed
- Marketing and public outreach
- Equity considerations
- Records retention
- Success metrics

Once the SMAP is completed, the Social Media Specialist will evaluate requests for social media, verify authorized agents and identify which trainings need to be completed before moving forward. Please allow five (5) business days for review, and plan accordingly.

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Existing Social Media Channels

Departments using social media channels created prior to the publication of this handbook must work with the Social Media Specialist to update the SMAP on record.

6. USE OF SOCIAL MEDIA

Professional Use

Only authorized agents may post content to social media channels on behalf of a department. Non-Executive Branch employees should consult their department's communications policy for more information on social media use within their department.

Do not disclose confidential or proprietary information acquired by way of your official position with the county. This restriction applies whether the information is disclosed on professional or personal social media accounts, or by any other method.

Do not use personal social media accounts for work purposes. This is to facilitate compliance with public records law and protect information on your personal accounts from public disclosure.

You should always consider whether it's appropriate to post an opinion, commit your department to a course of action, or discuss areas outside your expertise online.

Hourly employees should not work on social media after hours without prior approval. This is considered overtime, and failure to obtain prior authorization may be cause for corrective action.

Personal Use

You may access your personal social media accounts at work for limited personal communications, and as long as it doesn't interfere with your tasks. Please refer to KCIT's [Acceptable Use of IT Assets](#).

Do not use a county email address when using social media in personal capacities. For example, don't create a personal Facebook or Twitter account using your .gov email address.

If you identify yourself as a King County employee when conducting personal social media activities, consider stating in your profile that your comments are not representative of King County government. Examples include:

- *Twitter bio*: Tweets are my own.
- *Blog or website bio*: While I work for King County, anything I publish is my personal opinion and not necessarily the opinions or position of King County government.

Whether or not you specify on your personal social media accounts that you work for King County, your employment with the county is public record. Be mindful that whenever you discuss county business online, whether in a personal or professional capacity, your comments can be tied back to your employment with King County.

Nothing in this handbook is meant to prevent an employee from exercising his or her right to make a complaint of discrimination or other workplace misconduct, engage in lawful collective bargaining activity, or to express an opinion on a matter of public concern that does not unduly disrupt county operations.

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7. ENGAGING WITH THE PUBLIC

Social media posts made on behalf of King County should include no form of profanity, obscenity, or copyright violations. Inappropriate use of social media can be grounds for corrective action, including disciplinary action.

It is not appropriate to engage in arguments with members of the public who may be critical of your department. Once you make comments or posts on social media sites, they can typically be seen by anyone and usually cannot be deleted.

If there is any question or hesitation regarding the content of a potential comment or post, ask your manager, department PIO, or the Social Media Specialist.

It is recommended social media channels managed by King County departments include a terms of use statement that addresses comments made by the public. Here is an example from the King County, WA Facebook page:

- *King County reserves the right to delete posts that are objectionable or offensive in nature, not relevant or off-topic, inaccurate, and those which violate Facebook's Terms of Service.*

Comments Policy

King County welcomes dialogue with the public. Comments are subject to public disclosure laws and will be screened for the following:

- Potentially libelous comments.
- Obscene or explicit comments.
- Hateful or mean-spirited comments.
- Personal attacks, insults, or threatening language.
- Plagiarized material, or material that violates intellectual property rights.
- Private, personal information published without consent.
- Commercial promotions or spam.
- Comments that are off-topic or that link to material that is off-topic.
- Comments that embed images from external sources.

Customer Service

It is recommended departments have a documented plan (that includes quality control) for managing customer service on social media channels.

Authorized agents are responsible for managing customer service inquiries for their departments. If possible, respond to comments or questions within 24 hours on the channel in which it was originally published. For example, a question on Twitter should receive a reply on Twitter. It is a department's responsibility to decide how to address questions on a case-by-case basis.

Social media channels are an increasingly important avenue for the public to provide feedback and engage with King County government. Here is an example of a customer service plan for the @kcnews Twitter account:

1. Let the person know you will be looking into it with a simple response: "Thank you for your comment. We'll look into it and get back to you shortly."

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2. Forward the social media link to Customer Service so it can be entered into the Customer Relationship Management (CRM). Email: customerservice@kingcounty.gov.
3. Regardless of whether traditional communications are needed (e.g. phone, email), Customer Service will provide a response to share on social media.

8. PUBLIC RECORDS

Content published on social media channels that relates to the conduct of government actions will be retained and managed by departments in compliance with King County records retention and Washington state recordkeeping requirements. Departments should set all privacy settings on social media channels to public.

The public may not be aware of the state's public records law, so departments should include a statement similar to the following on their social media profiles, where applicable:

- *This is a King County government page and all content is a public record and may be subject to public disclosure.*

Records Retention

Do not assume third-party platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, and WordPress will keep accurate records of your content—they are under no obligation to do so.

Keep in mind that social media accounts used for county business, including personal accounts, may be subject to the Public Records Act (RCW Ch. 42.56), even if the work was done on personal time and equipment.

King County uses a cloud-based application called Page Freezer to record county web pages and authorized Facebook and Twitter accounts. Departments are encouraged to contact the Social Media Specialist or Web Team to register their Facebook and Twitter accounts with Page Freezer.

- *Social Media Specialist:* socialmedia@kingcounty.gov
- *King County Web Team:* webteam@kingcounty.gov

To search for records in Page Freezer, you will need the login credentials. Contact the Social Media Specialist or Web Team to receive access to the Page Freezer archives.

Page Freezer only archives content created on Facebook and Twitter. Additional social media accounts such as Pinterest, blogs, and YouTube are not retained via Page Freezer. Records for those accounts must be managed separately.

One way to manage records is to take a screen capture of posts (including ones you delete) and store the images in a designated folder on a department's shared drive. We are currently researching ways to archive social media created on sites other than Facebook and Twitter.

10. SECURITY

Departments must follow KCIT's [Password Management Policy and Guidelines](#), which provides employees with guidance in proper password management and practices. Many King County

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systems enforce these practices, but authorized agents must remember to follow the rules on their own as few social media channels mandate them.

Departments must change social media passwords every ninety (90) days and immediately after the password or social media site accessed using the password has been, or is suspected of being, compromised. Departments must also change passwords immediately if authorized agents are removed as administrators or leave county employment.

Do not use automated login options on social media channels, such as Facebook's "Keep me logged in" feature. This is to prevent unauthorized access to county social media channels should a computer or digital device be compromised or stolen.

If you use a third-party program such as Last Pass to remember your passwords, make sure to configure the account so that you must log into Last Pass each time you open a web browser.

If additional security guidance is needed by a department, contact the Information Assurance hotline at 206-263-7980 or infosec@kingcounty.gov.

11. SOCIAL MEDIA TOOLS

Desktop Applications

As social media use becomes more ubiquitous, a handful of third-party applications have sprung up to make managing social media channels easier. HootSuite, for example, is a desktop application that allows users to manage Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and other social media accounts all in one place—this is called a dashboard.

As a best practice, authorized agents should not use professional and personal social media channels in the same dashboard. This helps prevent the accidental posting of personal information from official county social media channels.

If employees use desktop applications such as HootSuite to manage county social media channels, they must use their .gov email address and a password that's unique to the application (i.e. not the same as your King County email password). Employees could then use a personal email address to access a separate dashboard used for personal social media use.

Mobile Apps

Authorized agents should use different mobile apps for professional and personal use of social media. If an employee uses Twitter's mobile app to manage a county Twitter account, for example, they should not use that same mobile app to send personal tweets. This helps prevent the accidental posting of personal information to county social media channels.

It is recommended that authorized agents with smartphones download the Facebook Page Manager mobile app to post information to county Facebook pages. This app is different than the popular Facebook mobile app that you use to manage your personal account. The Page Manager mobile app allows you to post to your county Facebook page without accessing your personal account. This keeps your personal and professional accounts separate and helps prevent the accidental posting of personal information to county social media accounts.

The Page Manager mobile app is not available on all operating systems. Contact the Social Media Specialist for questions about mobile apps and social media use.